Canada

Tourism News

SURVEY OF AMERICAN VACATION TRIP INTENTIONS

Intentions to Travel Related To Energy and Economic Situation In United States

The information presented in this report is based on telephone interviews among approximately 1,300 respondents in the United States in February, 1975. The Survey of Consumer Attitudes is conducted quarterly by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan. Questions on vacation trip intentions were included at the request of the Canadian Government Office of Tourism.

Pamela Hockin,
Marketing Research
Canadian Government Office of Tourism
July, 1975.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SURVEY

- From the results of this quarterly Survey of Consumer Attitudes it is apparent that the economic situation and anticipated increases in fuel costs are having very little effect on the vacation trip intentions of Americans.

- Most of the respondents in this survey felt that business conditions were bad and that they would continue to be so during the next 12 months. Respondents felt that it was a bad time to spend money and that one should try to cut down on spending by buying only essential goods. It is apparent that vacation trips are considered "essential" by many respondents. Of those persons who said one should try to cut down on spending 80% said they almost certainly or probably would take their intended vacation trip in 1975. Similarly, of those who said it was a bad time to spend money, 85% said that they would take their intended vacation trip in 1975 despite the economic situation.

- Most respondents anticipated the price of gasoline to go up during 1975. However, the travel mode of those who thought that the price would go up is the same as for all respondents. Approximately, 29% of the respondents said that they planned to do less driving on their vacation trip in 1975, and the main reason given for this was that destinations are closer to home (42%).

- The proportion of respondents who are planning a trip to Canada this year is down 2% from 7% who actually took a trip in 1974. The travel mode for those who are planning to visit Canada is, unquestionably, the automobile - favoured by 83%. Reasons given for not considering a trip to Canada were varied but it is apparent that the cost of gas or gas shortages are not significant deterrents to travel in Canada.

- Of the respondents who were not considering a trip to Canada, 21% had not yet finally decided that they would not visit Canada. Therefore, actual trips to Canada could possibly be higher than trip intentions presently indicate.

- The most recent Survey of Consumer Attitudes (May) indicates that consumers are much less pessimistic about business conditions and inflation than they were when the February Survey was conducted. Although there is no statistical data available to indicate that vacation trip planning has responded to this increased consumer optimism it may be that vacation trip intentions have changed as well.

SURVEY OF AMERICAN VACATION TRIP INTENTIONS

The Canadian Government Office of Tourism commissioned a series of questions on vacation trips in the Survey Research Center's February, 1975 Survey of Consumer Attitudes. The purpose of these questions was to ascertain whether Americans are changing their attitudes about taking vacation trips, in general, and to Canada, in specific, in relation to the current economic situation and the energy situation.

The February, 1975 Survey showed that the "index of consumer sentiment", or the "index of confidence", had edged down marginally from 58.4 in October, 1974 to 58.0. In the view of the Survey Research Center this is a "bottoming out" effect. The trend in confidence in business is down but there appears to be an improvement on assessment of respondent's personal financial situation. One of the major contributors to this feeling is the awareness of dropping prices. Most respondents (72%) feel that they will be better off, or at least the same, financially, in a year.

This feeling of "being better off" is reflected in respondents' vacation plans. 58% of the respondents answered "yes", "probably" or "maybe" to the question, "Do you think you may take a vacation trip away from home during the next 12 months?". Only 53% of the respondents had taken a vacation trip during 1974. The proportion of people planning a vacation trip for 1975 is greater than the proportion who actually took trips during 1974. Of the respondents who took a vacation trip in 1974, 85% almost certainly, or probably, will take a vacation trip in 1975. Similarly, of the respondents who did not take a vacation trip in 1974, 66% will almost certainly, or probably, take a vacation trip in 1975.

Chance of taking planned vacation trip in 1975	All Respondents Took a vacation trip in 1974			
	Yes (548)*		No (224)	
Almost certain	50%	85%	30%	66%
Probably will	35%		36%	
Even chance	15%		31%	
Less than even chance	1%		3%	

The intended mode of travel for 1975 vacation trips is mainly by automobile (70%) or plane (20%). Again, there has been a slight change from actual trips in 1974 - driving is down 2% in 1975. Of those who are planning a trip in 1975, 5% said they planned to visit Canada. This can be compared with the 7% of those who took a vacation in 1974 who actually visited Canada. Therefore, the survey has shown that intended vacation trips for 1975 have increased over actual trips in 1974, but intended trips to Canada have decreased.

Cross tabulations of other questions asked by SRC about business conditions, personal financial conditions, and the price of gasoline with trip intentions indicate the overall feeling that respondents plan on taking their vacation trip despite increases in the price of gasoline or increased economic/financial

* ( ) numbers in brackets indicate sample size and should be considered when interpreting the results.

stress. Of the respondents who felt they would be worse off financially in a year's time, 83% said they would probably or most certainly take their planned vacation trip. This can be compared with 82% of those respondents who felt they would be better off in a year's time. If the price of gasoline goes up only 23% will do less driving (based on all respondents who drove on their vacation trip(s) last year and who plan on driving this year).

The questions which the CGOT commissioned can be categorized as follows:

1. Questions about intended vacation trips during 1975.

2. Questions about those vacation trips with Canada as a planned destination.

3. Questions about vacation trips taken in 1974.

Care must be taken when interpreting some results as samples are often small.

Detailed Results

INTENDED VACATION TRIPS DURING 1975.

Respondents were asked:

1. Do you think you may take a vacation trip away from home in the next 12 months? Overall, 58% answered "yes", "probably" or "maybe". Only a very few were uncertain. Response was most affirmative in the upper family income groups.

	Income Level of Family				
	Less than $5,000	$5,000-$9,999	$10,000-$14,999	Over $15,000	All Respondents
Yes, probably, maybe	33%	55%	60%	75%	58%
No, probably not	67%	45%	39%	25%	42%
Don't know	-	*	*	-	*

2. When asked "what are the chances that you will take this trip" respondents were fairly certain (79%) that they probably would, or almost certainly would, take their planned trip. Upper income level families seemed to be most certain about their travel plans.

	Income Level of Family					
	Less than $5,000	$5,000-$9,999	$10,000-$14,999	Over $15,000	Total Respondents	
Almost certain	45%	27%	47%	50%	44%	79%
Probably will	29%	48%	34%	31%	35%	
Even chance; may or may not	26%	23%	19%	17%	20%	
Less than even chance		2%	*	2%	1%	

- no respondents in this category
* less than 1%

3. The respondents who answered "yes" to the first question were asked, "Where do you think you might go?" Some respondents planned more than one trip. Anticipated destinations of their first trip follow. Overall, 79% of the respondents planned destinations in the U.S.A. Canada was the destination of 5% of the respondents. Canada was most preferred by the $10,000-$14,999 family income group. Overseas travel was most popular with the over $15,000 income group.

	Income Level of Family				
Intended Destinations	Less than $5,000 (50)	$5,000-$9,999 (148)	$10,000-$14,999 (173)	Over $15,000 (310)	Total Respondents (769)
U.S.A.	91%	85%	75%	76%	79%
Canada	3%	3%	8%	4%	5% (37)
Foreign Countries Other than Canada	5%	2%	8%	13%	9%
Don't know	1%	7%	7%	5%	6%
Other	–	2%	1%	2%	1%

The following provinces were mentioned as destinations by those who intended on taking their vacation trips to Canada.

Intended Destination	All Respondents Planning a Trip to Canada (37)
Alberta	3%
British Columbia	8%
Nova Scotia	2%
Ontario	10%
Prince Edward Island	3%
Quebec	2%
Canada (province not named)	72%

13% of the respondents said they planned a second trip in 1975. Of these, 11%, or 1% of the total respondents said they planned on going to Canada. Just 3% of the sample planned to take a third trip in 1975.

4. "When will you take this trip?" Summer (June-August) appears to be the most popular vacation period for all income groups (62%). Quite a high percentage of respondents in the lower income groups vacation in the Summer.

	Income Level of Family				
	Less than $5,000	$5,000-$9,999	$10,000-$14,999	Over $15,000	Total Respondents
Winter (December-Febryary)	11%	4%	8%	7%	7%
Spring (March-May)	19%	17%	16%	28%	21%
Summer (June-August)	68%	67%	65%	53%	62%
Fall (September-November)	3%	8%	9%	10%	8%
Don't Know	–	5%	1%	2%	2%

The seasons that second and third trip are taken in are much the same as for the first trip. Of the respondents (37) taking a trip to Canada, 85% are planning to come in the summer months.

5. "How do you plan to go?" Of all the respondents who plan to take a trip in 1975, 70% will drive (car, camper, truck, mobile home), 20% will fly and 3% will go by bus. The middle income families will drive the most often and the highest and lowest income families intend to do the most flying.

	Income Level of Family				
Travel Mode	Less than $5,000	$5,000-$9,999	$10,000-$14,999	Over $15,000	Total Respondents
Drive; car, camper, truck, mobile home	54%	80%	78%	66%	70%
Bus	11%	3%	1%	*	3%
Train	-	2%	1%	1%	1%
Plane	26%	9%	15%	26%	20%
Drive and Plane	-	2%	-	*	*
Plane and Bus/Train/Boat	-	1%	*	*	*
Other	7%	-	*	3%	2%
Don't Know	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%

Of those respondents who are planning on visiting Canada, 83% say they will drive, 9% will come by plane, 3% by bus and 6% by other means (sample 37).

6. To better understand what effect the price of gas might have on travel mode a cross tabulation was performed between intended travel mode for 1975 trips and the price of gas. As the following table indicates there are no apparent correlations between mode and price of gas. For all families, 71% said they are planning on driving even though they anticipate the price of gas to go up. The lowest and highest income groups will do the least amount of driving if prices increase.

	Anticipated Price of Gas in 1975		
Travel Mode (All families)	Go up (571)	Stay Same (111)	Go Down (7)
Drive (car, camper, truck	71%	69%	40%
mobile home)		2%	-
Bus	3%	2%	-
Train	1%	21%	46%
Plane	20%	-	-
Drive and Plane	*	-	-
Plane Bus/Train/Boat	*	2%	13%
Other	2%	3%	-

7. "How many nights do you expect to be away from home?" Over 82% of the respondents said that their trip would involve two weeks or less away from home. There were no great differences amongst income groups.

	Income Level of Family					
	Less than $5,000	$5,000-$9,999	$10,000-$14,999	Over $15,000	Total Respondents	
1-2 nights	-	6%	3%	3%	3%	83%
3-5 nights	16%	19%	17%	17%	17%	
6-15 nights	61%	59%	60%	65%	63%	
16-21 nights	9%	5%	10%	7%	7%	
> 21 nights	13%	6%	10%	7%	8%	
Don't know	1%	4%	*	1%	2%	

Of those respondents who are planning to visit Canada, 93% will stay less than two weeks (37).

8. a) Respondents were asked about the financial situation of their household. First of all, were they better or worse off, financially, than they were a year ago. The following table is based on the respondents of the 58% of the sample who said they probably or maybe would take a vacation trip in 1975. Of those who said they were better off now, 82% said they probably or most certainly would take the vacation trip that they mentioned in response to question 1. Of those who thought they were worse off, 77% said they would still probably or most certainly take their planned vacation trip. There is a slight difference but not enough to indicate that people are cutting back on their vacation trips because of personal finances.

Financial Situation Compared with a Year Ago

Chances of taking intended trip (for all families)	Better Now (250)		Same (122)		Worse Now (270)	
Almost certain	42%	82%	44%	78%	45%	77%
Probably will	40%		34%		32%	
Even chance	15%		21%		22%	
Less than even chance	2%		1%		1%	
N.A.	1%		*		-	

b) Secondly, did they think that they would be better off, financially in a years' time than they were at the present. Of the respondents who felt they would be better off in a year's time, 82% said that they would almost certainly or probably take their intended vacation trip. Of those who thought they would be worse off, 83% said that they would almost certainly, or probably take their intended vacation trip.

Expected Financial Situation in a Years' Time

Chances of taking intended trip (for all families)	Better Off (212)		Same (306)	Worse Off (105)	
Almost certain	45%	82%	44%	42%	83%
Probably will	37%		34%	41%	
Even chance	18%		20%	15%	
Less than even chance	*		1%	2%	

9. Respondents were asked about business conditions as a whole - do they think we will have good times, financially, or bad times during the next 12 months? Of those who said we would have bad times, 79% said they probably would or certianly would take their vacation trip in 1975. There is a slight difference in trip intentions among persons with varying predictions of future business conditions.

Business Conditions During the next 12 Months

Chances of taking intended trip (for all families)	Good Times (54)	Good with Qualifications (71)	Pro-Con (55)	Bad with Qualifications (67)	Bad Times (448)	
Almost certain	48%	53%	45%	53%	41%	79%
Probably will	36%	28%	38%	26%	38%	
Even chance	2%	18%	16%	21%	19%	
Less than even chance	-	2%	1%	-	1%	

10. Respondents were asked to think about their personal financial situation and to comment as to whether they were in a good or bad position to buy things or spend money. Of those respondents who said it was a good time, or as good a time as any, to buy, 85% said that they almost certainly or probably would take their intended vacation trip in 1975. Of those who felt it was a bad time to buy or they lacked money, 75% said that they almost certainly or probably would take their intended trip in 1975. The difference between the two groups is 10%. This is higher than for any previous question but it must be noted that 75% of the respondents still intend on taking their planned trip despite their feeling that it is a poor time to spend money.

Good/bad time to buy or spend money?

Chances of taking intended vacation (all families)	Good times as good as any (166)		Good time but don't want anything (35)	Bad time but can buy or will buy (20)	Bad times; Lack of money (412)	
Almost certain	48%	85%	56%	39%	40%	75%
Probably will	37%		37%	49%	35%	
Even chance	16%		5%	12%	24%	
Less than even chance	-		3%	-	1%	

11. Respondents were questioned about inflation and how they are personally coping with it. Of the respondents who said one should buy before prices go up, 78% said they probably or almost certainly would take a vacation trip in 1975. Of the respondents who said one should try to cut down on spending, 80% said they probably would or almost certainly would take their intended vacation trip in 1975. Even those respondents who intend to buy only essential goods and get along with what they have intend to take their vacation trip in 1975 (76%). See table on page 7.

Reaction to inflation	Chances of Taking Intended Vacation (all families)				
	Almost Certain	Probably Will	Even Chance	Less than Even Chance	
Buy before prices go up; (39)	55%	23%	19%	-	100%
Buy before prices go up, other qualifications. (18)	45%	40%	15%	-	100%
Both reactions (equally or not ascertained). (48)	41%	36%	21%	-	100%
Try to cut down spending, other qualifications. (20)	30%	41%	29%	-	100%
Try to cut down spending. (288)	40%	40%	19%	-	100%
Buy essential goods only, doesn't buy, gets along with what has (no indication of changing behaviour) buys only what needs. (163)	50%	26%	21%	-	100%
Neither reaction important to respondent. (48)	46%	40%	14%	-	100%

12. Respondents were asked whether they thought prices would go up or down during the next year and if they thought they would increase, by how much. As the following table indicates there is no significant difference in trip intentions between respondents who felt prices would stay the same and respondents who felt prices would go down.

Chances of taking intended trip (all families)	Prices Expected Next Year		
	Stay the Same (210)	Down (86)	D.K. (10)
Almost certain	44%	49%	49%
Probably will	36%	29%	20%
Even chance	19%	19%	31%
Less than even chance	1%	2%	-
N.A.	-	1%	-

Over 50% of the respondents thought prices would go up next year. Trip intentions do not seem to vary amongst those who thought prices would increase nor by the percentage of increase anticipated.

Chances of taking intended trip (all families)	Anticipated Amount of Price Increase (381)					
	1-2% (48)	3% (18)	4% (10)	5% (145)	6% (41)	10% (119)
Almost certain	46%	55%	41%	43%	44%	39%
Probably will	32%	30%	28%	39%	46%	40%
Even chance	22%	9%	32%	16%	10%	18%
Less than even chance	-	7%	-	2%	-	2%

VACATION TRIPS TO CANADA

13. Details of planned vacation trips to Canada were asked of the 5% of the respondents who indicated such a planned trip. They were asked why they were thinking of going to Canada rather than to some other place. Their main reasons seem to be such things as "been before, enjoyed it", "neverbeen to Canada", "boating, fishing, hunting". Secondary reasons stress visiting friends and relatives.

Reason for trip

Main Reason	All respondents planning a trip to Canada
Closeness	9%
Never been to Canada	16%
Been before, enjoyed it	17%
Beautiful, scenic,	4%
To see: Banff, Lake Louise, Rockies	5%
Other specific destinations	5%
Boating, fishing, hunting	13%
Other specific activities	10%
Visit relatives	10%
Visit friends	7%
Other	6%
	(34)

Secondary Reason	
Never been to Canada	22%
Been before, enjoyed it	6%
Beautiful, scenic	7%
To see: Quebec, French Canada, Montreal	6%
Boating, fishing, hunting	11%
Visit relatives	6%
Visit friends	43%
	(11)

14. a) "While you're in Canada, do you expect to spend part of your time camping out?" For all respondents the answer was most often "no" (68%).

Yes	26%
No	68%
Other	5%
	(39)

b) "Will you spend part of your time in Canada staying overnight with friends?" Of the respondents who were planning to come to Canada 70% said that they would not spend time staying overnight with friends and 25% said that they would.

c) "Will you spend part of your time in Canada staying in a hotel or motel?" 61% said that they intended to.

15. Those persons who were not considering a trip to Canada in 1975 were asked "Did you consider the possibility of taking a vacation trip to Canada this year?" Only a small percentage (8%) had considered taking a trip but had decided not to go. These respondents were then questionned as to why they had decided not to go to Canada. The main reasons given were general cost factors (17%), "prefer to do less driving" (8%), "have already been to Canada" (7%), "decided to go somewhere else" (9%). The cost of gas or gas shortages was not considered as a major reason for not vacationing in Canada.

	Income Level of Family				
Reasons for not coming to Canada	Less than $5,000	$5,000-$9,999	$10,000-$14,999	Over $15,000	All respondents not planning Canada trip (97)
Cost of gas	-	-	-	2%	*
Gas shortages	-	-	-	2%	*
Too far; not enough time	9%	-	13%	6%	7%
Prefer to do less driving	9%	12%	8%	9%	10%
Already been to Canada	-	12%	9%	7%	7%
"See America first"	9%	-	5%	-	2%
General cost factors	22%	-	22%	22%	17%
Climate, too cold	9%	12%	-	6%	6%
Haven't decided yet	13%	30%	21%	21%	21%
Decided to go somewhere else	9%	6%	4%	10%	9%
Other	19%	29%	18%	12%	16%
Don't know	-	-	-	2%	*

Secondary reasons were the cost of gas (14%), gas shortages (7%), climate (8%) and the general feeling that it was too far and there was not enough time (7%).

VACATION TRIPS IN 1974

16. Respondents were asked if they took any vacation trips away from home in 1974. Overall, 53% of the respondents had taken at least one vacation trip in 1974. Fewer respondents with family incomes of under $10,000 had taken a vacation trip in 1974 compared with respondents in the upper income groups.

Took vacation trip in 1974	Income Level of Family Less than $5,000	$5,000-$9,999	$10,000-$14,999	Over $15,000	All Respondents (1262)
Yes	30%	45%	55%	77%	53%
No	70%	55%	45%	28%	48%

About one in eight (13%) had taken a second trip in 1974. Of these, 7% had gone to Canada. Just under 5% took a third trip and very few mentioned Canada as their destination.

17. Those persons who answered "yes" to question 16 were then asked where they went in 1974. The favourite destination was the United States (82%) with only 7% having gone to Canada. When the respondents were asked where they think they might go in 1975, 5% said to Canada - a decrease of 2% from actual trips in 1974 to planned trips in 1975.

Destination in 1974	Income Level of Family Less than $5,000	$5,000-$9,999	$10,000-$14,999	Over $15,000	Total Respondents (700)
U.S.A.	81%	84%	82%	82%	82%
Canada	6%	8%	8%	7%	7% (49)
Foreign countries other than Canada	14%	6%	10%	11%	10%
Other	-	2%	-	-	1%

18. "How did you go?" Respondents indicated that they mainly drove (car, camper truck, mobile home) on their vacation trip in 1974 (72%). 20% of the respondents said that they went by plane.

Mode of travel in 1974	Income Level of Family Less than $5,000	$5,000-$9,999	$10,000-$14,999	Over $15,000	Total Respondents (700)
Drive (car, camper, truck mobile home)	56%	76%	79%	71%	72%
Bus	9%	2%	3%	1%	3%
Train	-	*	1%	*	*
Plane	21%	17%	14%	24%	20%
Drive/Plane	6%	-	1%	1%	2%
Plane and Bus/Train/Boat	-	2%	1%	1%	1%
Other (including combinations)	8%	*	*	2%	2%

The following table shows that there is little change in mode of travel between actual trips in 1974 and planned trips in 1975.

Mode of Travel	Actual Trips 1974	Planned Trips 1975
Drive (car, camper, truck mobile home	72%	70%
Bus	3%	3%
Train	*	1%
Plane	20%	20%
Drive/Plane	2%	*
Plane and Bus/Train/Boat	1%	*
Other (including combinations)	2%	2%

19. "On your vacation trip this year, do you expect to do more driving than last year, about the same or less driving". Overall, 44% said that they expected to do the same amount of driving, 26% more, and 29% less. Those persons in the highest income group most often said they expected to do more.

20. "Why do you say so?" The table below indicates why respondents said they thought they would drive more on their vacation trip in 1975. The main reason seems to be that their chosen destination will be further from home.

	Income Level of Family				
Reason for Driving More	Less than $5,000	$5,000-$9,999	$10,000-$14,999	Over $15,000	Total Respondents (108)
Price of gas	-	-	3%	3%	2%
Availability of gas	-	-	9%	3%	4%
Destination farther from home	100%	95%	83%	79%	84%
Will do more driving at destination	-	5%	-	7%	5%

The main reason given for travelling less in 1975 is that the chosen destination is closer to home than in previous years. However, the price of gas is given as a reason by 16% of the respondents. This percentage is highest for the respondents in the $5,000-$9,999 income group.

	Income Level of Family				
Reasons for Driving Less	Less than $5,000	$5,000-$9,999	$10,000-$14,999	Over $15,000	Total Respondents (84)
Price of gas	-	36%	23%	8%	16%
Availability of gas	-	-	-	5%	3%
Cost (except gas)	-	-	8%	12%	8%
Destination closer to home	27%	36%	37%	50%	42%
Less driving at destination	73%	-	4%	18%	10%
No trip this year	-	21%	10%	3%	11%
Prefer to do less driving	-	7%	19%	5%	8%

21. All respondents who drove on their vacation trip(s) last year and who intended to drive on their vacation trip(s) in 1975 felt the following way about the effect of gas prices on the amount of driving that they intend to do: Of those respondents who thought that the price of gas would stay the same, 25% said they would do more driving. Of those who thought the price would go up, 23% said they would drive less, 46% said the same amount and 30% said more.

	Expect gas prices to:		
Amount of driving (all families)	Go Up (318)	Stay Same (51)	Go Down (4)
More	30%	25%	52%
Same	46%	62%	25%
Less	23%	12%	25%
D.K.	*	2%	-